



# DAILY EXPRESS

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## Giving legal aid to asylum seekers is waste of money

**L**AVISHING legal aid funding on asylum seekers is costing taxpayers more than £600,000 a week. This is a figure that has been rising steadily for years as a result of the failure to secure our borders.

Some of these payments are even being made to the lawyers of failed asylum seekers. These are people who have already been told they have no right to stay in this country yet still they are given our money.

It is sheer madness for the Government to be paying for their attempts to avoid deportation even after they have been ordered to leave.

Lest we forget, the legal aid funding being dispensed is but a fraction of the total amount swallowed up by the asylum system. Meanwhile, the Border Force has to persevere with a woeful lack of equipment and chronic shortages of staff all in the name of saving money. When the savings made are at risk of being outweighed by the cost of dealing with more asylum seekers, this makes no sense.

Restoring sanity to the asylum system requires a two-pronged approach. We need reforms to make it easier to process asylum claims and to deport those who have no right to be in Britain. We also need functioning border controls that prevent many of these people from reaching our shores in the first place.

## Bureaucrat can button up

**P**RESIDENT of the European Parliament Martin Schulz is upset that MEPs are, as he sees it, being left out of Brexit discussions.

Faced with a major task that requires serious thought and dignified leadership this risible figure spends his time worrying about which Brussels bureaucrat is the most important.

Of course the European Parliament is being sidelined. It is little more than a talking shop designed to make the EU appear at least a little bit democratic. Everybody in Brussels knows it wields little real power which is precisely why so few people care what Schulz thinks.

With Britain in a position of strength and committed to leaving whatever happens the only person really worth listening to is Theresa May.

## Road safety is important

**I**T IS unusual for this newspaper to take the side of health and safety bosses during a row. However, they are right to have told lollipop lady Sheila Allen that she must not high-five children who are crossing the road. Her playful actions undermine the important message that children must not mess around near traffic and motorists say she has caused delays.

Ms Allen and her high-fives are clearly loved by children, parents and teachers but road safety must come first.

# EU fanatics want to keep us in for as long as possible

**Y**OU'VE heard the old riddle: "How long is a piece of string?" Today we have a new one: "How long is a Brexit?" Depending on how much of a Eurofanatic you are the answer is either 18 months, four years or a decade. It seems the trick in predicting when we will finally be freed from the clutches of the EU is to take a reasonable number and double it, treble it or make a wild guess based more on personal preference than reality. It is the latter course that critics fear may have held the greatest attraction for Our Man in Brussels Sir Ivan Rogers.

According to the BBC (and how it must have loved slipping this particular canard into its slanted anti-Brexit bulletins), Ivan the Terrible has informed the Government that in his view it could take 10 years to finalise a Brexit trade deal. Even when complete, he opined, it would then have to go through a marathon process of being ratified by the other 27 EU states.

Our ambassador to the Holy European Empire is such a pessimist that it wouldn't surprise me if he puts prunes and senna pods on his bran flakes.

But what else can we expect from a career diplomat whose CV includes a spell as private secretary to Kenneth Clarke, when that arch-Europhile was chancellor of the exchequer? Young Rogers would have found it hard not to be greatly influenced as he fawned at the suede-shoed feet of the old master.

The silky-smooth path to a gold-plated pension then took the boy wonder to Brussels as right hand man to European Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan, a man so enamoured of continental living that he probably dreamed of Chateau Margaux and ripe camembert.

**A**FTER serving a penance working for both Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, a knighthood and a handsome salary of almost £170,000 a year took Sir Ivan back to Brussels as our grand fromage at Euro HQ. It was there that he advised David Cameron (remember him?) earlier in the year on what the then prime minister laughingly described as his "negotiations" with European leaders. It is



DOOM AND GLOOM: Philip Hammond alongside our EU ambassador Sir Ivan Rogers

Picture: GETTY



## Chris Roycroft-Davis Political commentator

widely believed in Whitehall that it was Sir Ivan who persuaded Cameron to water down his demands so that whatever "deal" was reached would not upset the likes of Hollande and Merkel. Cameron would happily have gone along with this advice because with little knowledge of how the real world works, he would have had little inkling of what a strong negotiating position Britain was then in.

Today, with a new down-to-earth PM in Downing Street, the cards in our hand have inexorably risen in strength until we now have a full house.

How it must pain Sir Ivan, if he allows himself the occasional private moment of brutal honesty, to realise that his weak advice was the cause of the previous prime minister's downfall – and the widespread perception that the EU was attempting to bully British voters in the run-up to the referendum was a major reason why the majority voted for Brexit. You were very wrong then, Sir Ivan, and you're just as wrong now with your

prediction of a dismal decade. Brexit Secretary David Davis told MPs earlier this week that he expected Brexit to happen in 18 months from the day we trigger Article 50, hopefully before the end of March. But then Mr Davis has always struck me as a man made of solid stuff, who knows what he wants and is determined to get it.

Not so the Chancellor, the perpetually gloomy Philip Hammond, who this week told MPs on the Treasury committee that "thoughtful politicians" believed Brexit could possibly take four years to achieve. Thoughtful? Who – Nick Clegg, Tim Farron? Mind you, this gloomy prognostication was an improvement on Hammond's stab in the dark last July when he feared (welcomed?) six years of wheeling and dealing.

It is curious that just at the moment some of our home-grown dismal jimmies are taking fright, many of the leaders of the 27 other EU countries are enjoying a healthy dose of realism. Around the dinner

table in Brussels last night, as they met for a pre-Brexit summit from which Theresa May was quite properly excluded, the talk was not of how long will it take Britain to leave but how quickly can it be achieved.

Sensible European leaders – and there are some, mainly in the smaller countries – know full well that it is not in their interests for the uncertainty over the EU's future to be allowed to drag on.

**T**HE only people who would benefit from Brexit being stretched out long past 2020 would be those whose well-heeled jobs will disappear when we do eventually go. The role of ambassador springs to mind, although I do not suggest for one moment that he would be influenced by his own personal wellbeing, for he is clearly a man of integrity.

But put yourself in his shoes: if you were a glass half-empty person, wouldn't you draw comfort from the realisation that the more downbeat the advice you gave, the greater the prospect you would continue to enjoy your comfortable lifestyle for a few years more?

Let us give thanks that mandarins such as Sir Ivan are hewn from the same god-like mould as Supreme Court judges, and are easily able to put deeply held personal convictions to one side while acting with total impartiality in the interests of the common people.

## 'It's in no one's interest to let things drag on'